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House of Representatives

The House met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. MILLER of Florida].

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, March 10, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAN MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

As we look upon the majesty of Your world, O God, as we contemplate the wondrous gifts of Your Spirit, as we seek to learn more from others and to share in our common destiny, help us to translate those blessings into our daily lives. May the words of good will and respect that we hold together and the aspirations of each individual find fulfillment and purpose when good words become good deeds and high hopes become realized along life's way. Encourage us, O God, to say the good word and to do the good deed this day and every day, we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr.

BARRETT] come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SPECIAL ORDERS

AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NATION'S AIRSPACE SAFETY HAS NO DIRECTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned about the state of affairs at the Federal Aviation Administration [FAA].

Vacancies at the highest levels have left the FAA leaderless, rudderless, and unable to meet its responsibilities to the aviation industry and the flying public. Last summer, then FAA Administrator David Hinson announced his plans to return to the private sector before the end of the year and in November he was gone. Since that time—and despite the months of advance notice provided—the position has been vacant.

It's now March and there is no appointed Administrator. The President has not even nominated someone for the position. Not only that, Deputy Administrator Linda Daschle, who had been serving as Acting FAA Administrator, left the agency in January. Another interim Acting Administrator was recently named, but there is now no appointed Administrator and no Deputy Administrator. Compounding that, the department heads of regulation and certification, and airports have each been on the job for less than a year.

The agency responsible for keeping the Nation's airspace safe has no direction. What's more, career employees with experience in some of the most critical departments at the

agency are leaving. But I do want to make clear that there are many dedicated, experienced career personnel who, day in and day out, keep the FAA running and our skies safe under very trying conditions. Since last July, I have been urging the President to nominate a qualified permanent Administrator for the FAA. I have written to the President on three separate occasions—July 30, 1996; November 18, 1996; and January 27, 1997—urging him to act quickly on this important nomination, and I ask unanimous consent that these letters be included in the RECORD. Again today, I implore the President to act.

Last year, Congress included provisions in the FAA reauthorization legislation to establish a National Civil Aviation Review Commission to study safety, airport capital needs, and ways to meet those needs, and FAA operational needs and ways to meet those needs. The Commission must report back to Congress with detailed analysis and recommendations no later than 1 year after the date of enactment—no later than October 9, 1997. Guess what? The Commission has not begun work because its members still haven't been named. Thirteen of the 21 members of this Commission are to be appointed by the Secretary of Transportation and not a single commission member has been appointed. Only 7 months are left for the Commission to do its work. This is a critical assignment and yet nothing is happening.

Meanwhile, there's the issue of aviation taxes. We have lost \$5.2 billion in aviation taxes due to funding disputes over FAA financing. These taxes expired at the end of 1995, were reinstated briefly in August 1996, expired again at the end of the year and were just recently reinstated but only for 6 months. And the FAA didn't even notice that these taxes were not being collected last year, resulting in a near crisis. Shouldn't the FAA have been working to avoid this current crisis? Is anybody there? Does anybody care?

Last year's ValuJet and TWA accidents underscored the need to improve aviation safety and airport security. The media has reported frightening tales of how fraudulent, bogus parts get inside our commercial airliners. Last year, air traffic centers all over the country experienced breakdowns in important radar and

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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